

COVID-19 in Indiana

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Disease Basics

Q: What is 2019 novel coronavirus?

A: The 2019 novel (new) coronavirus, or SARS-CoV-2, is a respiratory virus first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The name of the disease it causes, COVID-19, stands for corona (CO), virus (VI), disease (D) and the year it was identified. [Learn more about COVID-19 and its virus](#). In addition to the questions and answers below, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has additional questions and answers on the [CDC FAQs page](#).

Q. Why is COVID-19 such a big deal? Isn't this like the flu?

A: The novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus and is important for several reasons. First, it's a new virus that has not been previously identified. The virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold. That means there is no known cure or vaccine.

Second, some people are at [higher risk](#) of getting very sick from this illness than others, including older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. This risk to specific populations means that the CDC and Indiana Department of Health are asking individuals to practice everyday [precautions](#) to protect high-risk individuals, ourselves and others. This includes staying home when sick, practicing effective handwashing, wearing a mask, keeping physical distance of 6 feet away from others, and not touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

As a comparison, from the 2010-11 to the 2019-20 season, Influenza A and B viruses annually killed 12,000 to 61,000 in the U.S., the CDC estimates. In comparison, the COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2) has killed more than 210,000 in the U.S., according to [data](#) from the CDC.

Because a number of flu symptoms and [COVID-19 symptoms](#) are similar, testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Here's a look at the [viruses' similarities and differences](#).

Q: Are there cases in Indiana?

A: Yes. You can find the most recent information on COVID-19 cases [here](#). The data is updated every day at noon.

Q: Am I at risk for 2019-nCoV infection in the United States?

A: There is no vaccine for COVID-19 and no one is immune, so everyone is encouraged to follow the guidelines for social distancing to slow the spread of illness.

Q: How many people in Indiana and the United States have been infected?

A: The CDC updates the [total number of U.S. COVID-19 cases and deaths](#) and other statistics daily. The first U.S. infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus was reported on Jan. 21, 2020.

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: The SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19, has its origins in bats and now spreads from person-to-person, mostly through exposure to infected viral respiratory droplets.

People who are physically near (within 6 feet of) a person with COVID-19 or have direct contact with that person are at greatest risk of infection. That's because when sick people exhale by breathing, coughing, singing, sneezing or talking, they produce infectious droplets that can land in the mouths or noses of nearby people or possibly be inhaled into their lungs. Wearing a face mask that covers your mouth and nose, plus practicing physical distancing, are important to help avoid that and prevent infecting others.

There have been limited and uncommon situations in which the virus can sometimes spread by airborne transmission, according to the CDC. This spread was in poorly ventilated, enclosed spaces with people, often more than 6 feet from the source, having prolonged exposure to infected droplets often caused by heavier breathing out, such as exercise, shouting or singing.

Q: How long can the virus survive on surfaces?

A: SARS-CoV-2 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces of various materials, current evidence suggests. It may be possible for people to get COVID-19 by touching such a surface or object with the SARS-CoV-2 virus on it and then touching their own mouths, noses or possibly their eyes. But the virus mainly spreads person-to-person through exposure to infected viral respiratory droplets. Still, [cleaning visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection](#) is a best practice for preventing COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in households and community settings.

Q: Is SARS-CoV-2 the same as MERS-CoV or SARS-CoV?

A: No. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common both in people and many species of animals, including bats, camels, cats and cattle. Animal coronaviruses rarely infect people and spread between them. This did occur with [Middle East Respiratory Syndrome](#) (MERS-CoV), [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome](#) (SARS-CoV) and now with SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19. All three viruses have their [origins](#) in bats. However, the exact source of the new virus is unknown.

Q: What is the normal course of the illness?

A: The infection is different for everyone, ranging from mild illness to severe respiratory illness. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care by self-isolating. That includes monitoring symptoms and separating themselves from others. If anyone shows any of these emergency warning signs for COVID-19, seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

Q: What are the symptoms and emergency signs of COVID-19?

A: [Symptoms](#) may appear from 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees F or above) or chills (Fever may not be present in some patients, such as those who are very young, elderly, immunosuppressed or taking certain fever-lowering medications.)
- Congestion or runny nose
- Cough
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle or body aches
- Nausea or vomiting
- New loss of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat

Call 911 or your local emergency facility if someone shows any of these emergency signs. Notify the operator that you're seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.

- Bluish lips or face
- Inability to awaken or stay awake
- New confusion
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Trouble breathing

Prevention

Q: How can I help protect myself?

A: The best way to protect yourself is to avoid being exposed to the virus. Here are specific steps you can take (many of which can help prevent other respiratory infections, such as flu):

- Know how it [spreads](#) and take the proper precautions. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

- [Wash your hands](#) often for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- [Practice social distancing](#). Put 6 feet of distance between yourself and people who don't live in your household. This is especially important for people at higher risk of getting very sick.
- Wear a face [mask](#) when around others. You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. The [mask](#) is not a substitute for physical distancing.
- Stay home from work or school if you're sick or have symptoms of COVID-19.
- [Clean and disinfect](#) your home daily with extra steps when someone's sick.
- Monitor your health daily.

Q: How can I help prevent COVID-19 from spreading in my child's school?

A: Checking for the signs of COVID-19 every day before sending your child to school can help prevent the spread in your child's building. The Indiana Department of Health has created a checklist in [English](#) and [Spanish/Español](#) to make this easier for parents. There is also a quick reference guide for school attendance available in [English](#) and [Spanish/Español](#).

Parents also may find more helpful, general information in the ["What Parents Need to Know about COVID-19,"](#) developed by Indiana Emergency Medical Services for Children and the Indiana Department of Health. The guide includes how to explain COVID to your child and when you should take your child to an emergency room.

Q: What's the best way to decontaminate an area that has been exposed to COVID-19? What cleaning agents should be used?

A: Click for [detailed disinfection guidance](#); learn six [steps for safe, effective disinfectant use](#); and see a [searchable list of disinfectants](#) that meet the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) criteria for use on surfaces against SARS-CoV-2. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfecting products (e.g., application method, concentration, contact time, etc.).

Q: I want to know who is currently sick with COVID-19 and where these individuals are located, so that I can protect myself and my loved ones.

A: The Indiana Department of Health cannot release information about specific patients due to privacy laws. However, the state Department of Health's map shows the number of positive cases of COVID-19 in each county, among other pieces of information. This map is updated each Wednesday at noon ET and can be found here: [Indiana COVID-19 Dashboard](#). You can sort for a particular county by clicking on it in the map found under "County Distributions."

Q: I believe that my food may have been exposed to COVID-19. Does it need to be thrown out?

A: Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread person-to-person through infected respiratory droplets. There is no evidence about transmission of COVID-19 associated with food. Before preparing or eating food, it is important to always wash your hands with soap and water

for 20 seconds for general food safety. Throughout the day, wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing or going to the bathroom.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Learn more about food and COVID-19 in [English](#) and [Spanish/Español](#).

Medical Information

Q: I'm sick and think I might have COVID-19. Where do I go to be seen?

A: If you develop symptoms such as fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19, stay home and call your healthcare provider.

Before going to a medical appointment, please call the healthcare provider and say you may have COVID-19 so proper precautions can be taken to limit further transmission. Older patients and individuals who have severe underlying medical conditions or are immunocompromised should contact their healthcare provider early, even if their illness is mild.

If you have severe symptoms — such as trouble breathing, persistent chest pain or pressure, inability to awaken or stay awake, new confusion or bluish lips of face — immediately contact your healthcare provider or go to the emergency room to get care. If possible, alert them before you arrive so precautions to prevent spread to others can be taken.

Your doctor will determine if you have signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and whether you should be tested. You can also visit one of the Indiana Department of Health/Optum sites for free COVID-19 testing. [Click here](#) for a map and other additional information for testing locations across the state.

Q: What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

A: Close contact means you and a COVID-positive person:

- were within 6 feet of another or
- had direct physical contact (hugged or kissed) or
- were in the same home because you provided care for the person or
- shared eating or drinking utensils or
- were close enough that you got respiratory droplets on you when the person sneezed, coughed or otherwise expelled such droplets

Because you may have been exposed to COVID-19, the CDC recommends that you [quarantine](#) after your last close contact with a person with COVID-19. You also should:

- Watch for a fever (100.4 degrees F or above or lower depending on school threshold), cough, shortness of breath or [other symptoms](#) of COVID-19.
- If possible, stay away from others, especially people who are at [higher risk](#) for getting very sick from COVID-19.

Learn more about how to quarantine [here](#).

Q: What should I do if I believe my child has been exposed to COVID-19?

A: [Most children with COVID-19](#) experience no symptoms or mild ones, which tend to appear 2-14 days after exposure. Some, though, can get severely ill. The most common symptoms are fever and cough. Children without symptoms can spread the virus, as can asymptomatic adults.

If you believe your child or teen may have been exposed, check for COVID-19 symptoms daily, with particular attention to diarrhea; fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees F or above or lower depending on school threshold); new severe headache, especially with fever; new uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for a child with a chronic allergic or asthmatic cough, see if it has changed); sore throat; stomachache; or vomiting. Also, keep track of whom your child comes in close contact with to help any contact tracing.

If your child or teen becomes sick and may have been exposed to the virus or has been in an area where the virus is spreading:

- [Keep your child home](#) (includes symptoms, possible testing, talking with your child's childcare or school and medical emergency warning signs)
- Contact your child's healthcare provider and discuss whether your child needs to be evaluated or tested for COVID-19

If you suspect your child or someone your child knows has COVID-19 or has come in close contact with someone with COVID-19, visit [Coronavirus self-checker](#). This online tool will help you decide when to seek testing or medical care for your child.

The CDC and partners are investigating a rare but serious medical condition associated with COVID-19 in children called Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C). We do not yet know what causes MIS-C and who is at increased risk for developing it. Learn more about [MIS-C](#).

Q: I'm an employer. I'm concerned that one of my employees may have COVID-19. What should I do?

A: If you believe an employee is ill, recommend that your worker contact a healthcare provider. If possible, work with employees to see if those who are ill or have had contact with COVID-19 can work from home.

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, an Indiana Department of Health team or local health department will work with you to determine next steps, which will include 10 days of isolation for the employee [up to 14 days of quarantine](#) for exposed individuals from their last date of exposure to the infected employee.

More [guidance for business and employers](#) is available on the CDC website.

Q: My job includes traveling to individual homes. Should I continue working?

A: Employees who are concerned about their health or the health of their clients should discuss these concerns with their employer. More [guidance for businesses and employers](#) is available.

Q: I've been told to self-isolate. What does that mean?

A: Self-isolation keeps those who've tested positive for COVID-19, or who think or know they have COVID-19 and have symptoms, to remain separate from people who are not infected, even in their home. People in [isolation](#) should stay home, except to get medical care, until it's safe to be around others. At home, anyone infected or sick should:

- Stay in touch with your doctor. If you have an [emergency warning sign](#) (including trouble breathing), seek emergency medical care immediately and notify the dispatcher that you have COVID-19 so appropriate precautions may be taken.
- Stay in a room separate from other household members, if possible.
- Use a separate bathroom, if possible.
- Monitor your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with other members of the household and pets.
- Don't share personal household items, such as cups, towels and utensils.
- Wear a mask when around other people, if you are able to.

[Learn more about what to do if you're sick.](#)

Q: When can I be released from self-isolation and go back to work?

A: There are different [guidelines](#) for when you can end self-[isolation](#). Find your situation below for when you can be with others.

1. If you think you had COVID-19, or tested positive for it, and had symptoms at some point (all of the following apply):
 - At least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared; AND
 - At least 24 hours have passed with no fever and no use of fever-reducing medication; AND
 - Other symptoms are improving; though loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months and needn't delay the end of isolation.

2. If you tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms, you can be with others after 10 days since the date of your positive test.
3. If you were severely ill with COVID-19 or have a severely weakened immune system (immunocompromised) due to a health condition or medication:
 - If you were severely ill with COVID-19, you might need to stay home longer, up to 20 days after symptoms first appeared.
 - [Severely immunocompromised people](#) may require testing to determine when they can be around others. Talk to your healthcare provider. If your provider recommends follow-up testing, you'll be notified if you can be around others based on your results.

Your healthcare provider may work with an infectious disease expert at your [local health department](#) to determine when you can be around others.

Q: I have a dentist appointment. Is it safe to keep that appointment?

A: Dentists are taking steps to follow all established guidelines to protect staff and patients in their offices, according to the [Indiana Dental Association](#). Individuals who are concerned about visiting a doctor or dentist, or who are exhibiting symptoms of illness, should call ahead and discuss their concerns with the office. Individuals who believe they have symptoms of COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider first to get instructions so that appropriate infection-control measures can be implemented.

Q: My provider is refusing to see me. What do I do now?

A: If your healthcare provider is unavailable, please call the Indiana Department of Health's Call Center at 877-826-0011. Call 911 if you have symptoms such as trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to awaken or stay awake or bluish lips or face.

Public Health

Q: Where can I find information about student, teacher and staff positive COVID-19 cases in schools around the state?

A: The Indiana Department of Health's School Dashboard is part of the [Indiana COVID-19 Dashboard](#); just click on "School" near the top. The information's updated at noon every Monday.

Q: How is the state ensuring that COVID-positive individuals are observing isolation and those possibly exposed to the virus are observing quarantine?

A: The Indiana Department of Health is working to contact each COVID-positive or COVID-exposed person, check on any symptoms, give information and collect information about close contacts so we can work to notify them.

Anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 but has no symptoms, or who has symptoms of COVID-19, is asked to follow guidelines for [self-isolating](#) (staying away even from others in their home). Anyone who possibly has been exposed to the COVID-19 virus is asked to follow guidelines for [quarantining](#).

Q: What is the CDC doing about COVID-19?

A: The CDC is updating information regularly. Visit the [CDC's COVID-19 website](#). The Indiana Department of Health also has created a dedicated [website](#) with additional resources specific to Indiana.

Q: What guidance is available for healthcare professionals and health departments?

A: Professional resources for healthcare professionals and others in Indiana regarding COVID-19, including reporting and testing information, are available on the Indiana COVID-19 [website](#). The CDC has also posted [Information for Healthcare Professionals](#).

Q: Am I at risk for novel coronavirus from a package or products shipping from China?

A: It's not likely. [The virus](#) that causes COVID-19 [dies within hours or days on surfaces](#), making its spread from domestic or international mail, products or packaging unlikely. While it may be possible that people can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes, the virus mostly spreads through infected respiratory droplets. Still, after accepting deliveries and collecting mail, the CDC recommends washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Q: Am I at risk of getting COVID-19 from groceries or takeout food?

A: Currently, [food products, packaging or bags](#) are thought to pose low risk of infection from the COVID-19 virus. However, [good food safety practices](#) are important. So, refrigerate or freeze perishable items (dairy, eggs, meat, poultry, seafood, etc.) within two hours of purchasing or one hour if the air temperature is above 90 degrees F. Also, after you shop or handle food packages, and before you prepare or eat food, always [wash your hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Learn more about food and COVID-19 in [English](#) and [Spanish/Espanol](#). See other [tips tied to running errands](#).

Q: What is the state telling hospitals and care facilities regarding visitors?

A: Hospitals are encouraged to provide updates about changes to policies regarding appointments, providing nonurgent patient care by telephone and visitors. Hospitals may use their website or social media pages to share updates. See [guidance](#) from the Indiana Hospital Association.

Healthcare providers are encouraged to screen patients and visitors for symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., fever, cough, difficulty breathing) before entering the facility. Facilities can keep up-to-date on the [recommendations for preventing spread of COVID-19](#) on the CDC's

website. You can find [information on long-term care facilities in Indiana](#), and data on long-term care facilities is posted every Monday on the [Indiana Department of Health's COVID-19 dashboard](#); just click on LTC.

Long-term care facilities (nursing homes) now must provide outdoor visitation unless they have an outbreak and while outbreak testing continues. Outdoor visitation is preferred when possible. Also:

- All facilities should support and accommodate indoor visitation (especially during inclement weather and when residents are unable to go outside due to their medical condition) unless:
 - There has been a new case in the last 14 days, and the facility is doing outbreak testing.
 - The county positivity rate, according to CDC-provided rates, is more than 10%.
- Visitation should be allowed in compassionate care circumstances, including during outbreak testing and when the positivity rate is more than 10%.

More information is available [here](#).

Q: Should I be concerned about pets or other animals and COVID-19?

A: While this virus has its origins in bats, it spreads from person-to-person. There is no reason to think that any animals or pets in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus, but individuals who are symptomatic or who have tested positive for COVID-19 are urged to avoid contact with pets.

Q: Why should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I'm sick?

A: While several animal species have been infected, the pandemic is still driven by person-to-person transmission. Learn more from this [public health guidance](#). Treat pets as you would other human family members to protect them against infection – do not let pets interact with people outside the household.

Q. How does COVID-19 affect people who use tobacco products?

A: Researchers and medical professionals say it is reasonable to assume that smoking, and possibly vaping, could increase the risk of developing serious adverse effects from COVID-19.

In general, long-term smokers and e-cigarette users are at a heightened risk of developing chronic lung conditions. The CDC has said that those with serious underlying medical conditions, such as lung disease, heart disease and diabetes, may be at a higher risk from COVID-19.

Smoking and vaping have been shown to affect the lungs and the immune system, which strongly suggests that using these products increases the risk of infection and worse outcomes from COVID-19.

Experts warn, based on current research, that people with compromised health due to smoking or vaping and people with opioid, methamphetamine, cannabis and other substance use disorders could find themselves at increased risk of COVID-19 and its more serious complications.

With the global outbreak of COVID-19, now is the best time to quit tobacco use to keep your body resilient against disease. There are free resources available that Hoosiers can use in the comfort of their homes, including the Indiana Tobacco Quitline. Those who are ready to quit can call 1-800-Quit-Now for phone counseling or visit QuitNowIndiana.com for more information.

Young people interested in quitting vaping can text "Indiana" to 88709 to enroll in the This Is Quitting text messaging program.

Testing

Q: Where can I call if I have questions or if coronavirus infection is suspected?

A: Please visit the Indiana Department of Health's COVID-19 [website](#) for general information. Healthcare providers and members of the public who haven't found what they need can also call the department's call center at 877-826-0011. You can also find test sites and other information at the state Department of Health's website [here](#).

Q: How do I get a COVID-19 test? Will my insurance pay for it? If it won't, or I don't have insurance, will the state pay for it?

A: Free testing is available for anyone who lives or works in Indiana, regardless of symptoms, at all Indiana Department of Health/Optum sites. This [map has locations by county and site information](#). You can start the [required registration for a free test](#) or call **888-634-1116**. Insurance is not required, but if you have private health insurance, please bring that information with you. Results typically take 4-6 days. Other local testing available free of charge is also listed.

Testing is also available at retail and healthcare provider locations throughout the state, but requirements to be tested, insurance requirements, payment options and time to get results may vary.

Q: When should I be tested for COVID-19?

A: It's particularly important to [get tested](#) if you:

- Have symptoms of COVID-19: a fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees F or above), cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Traveled to an area where COVID-19 cases are increasing.
- Were in close contact with someone who has confirmed COVID-19.

- Have been asked or referred to get tested by your healthcare provider or local or state health department.

Not everyone needs to be tested. If you do get tested and have symptoms or are a close contact of an infected person, you should self-quarantine at home pending the results and follow the advice of your healthcare provider or a public health professional.

Q: How long does it take to get results from a COVID-19 test?

A: Times may vary for retail and healthcare providers.

Q: I've been told that I'm not allowed to enter a specific area without a negative test. How do I get a test completed?

A: Free testing is available for anyone who lives or works in Indiana at all Indiana Department of Health/Optum sites. Visit the department's website [for a map of testing sites](#) and information about getting a test at a location near you. Testing is also available at retail and healthcare provider locations throughout the state.

Travel

Q: I'm going on vacation to an area with COVID-19 cases. What do I need to do when I get back?

A: You may have been exposed to COVID-19 when traveling, domestically or internationally. While you may not have any symptoms and feel well, you could be contagious and spread the virus. The [returning from international travel page](#) tells you what actions to take to protect others from potentially getting sick, which travel activities put people at higher risk for COVID-19 exposure and what to do if you get sick after travel. Another CDC page has [links to other travel information](#).

Q: Is it safe to travel to a country where COVID-19 cases have occurred?

A: Because COVID-19 is present around the world, you need to know the risk level of where you're going. The CDC now provides [destination-specific travel recommendations](#). Those, and the [Travel Health Notices](#), include risk levels. Warning Level 3 means to avoid all nonessential travel (most of the globe); Alert Level 2, practice enhanced precautions; and Watch Level 1, practice usual precautions. There also are ratings for very low risk and unknown risk.

Q: What if I recently traveled to an area experiencing transmission of COVID-19 and got sick?

A: If you traveled to an area impacted by COVID-19 and feel sick with fever, cough or other [COVID-19 symptoms](#), you may have been exposed to the virus. If you're ill within 14 days after possibly being exposed to the virus, you should self-isolate at home and:

- [Take care of yourself, and take other precautions.](#) Avoid contact with others until it's safe for you to [end home isolation](#).
- Don't travel.
- If you do have COVID-19, know that most people recover at home without medical care.
- **Stay in touch with your healthcare provider.** Call before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, and let them know you might have COVID-19.
- **If you have an emergency warning sign (including trouble breathing),** get emergency medical care immediately.
- **If you live in close quarters with others, take [additional precautions](#) to protect them**

If you have a medical appointment that cannot be postponed, call your doctor's office and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.